

Puritan ethics to the economic virtues, in an age when such virtues were rarer than they are to-day gave a timely stimulus to economic efficiency. But it naturally, if unintentionally, modified the traditional attitude towards social obligations. For the spontaneous, doctrineless individualism, which became the rule of English public life a century before the philosophy of it was propounded by Adam Smith, no single cause was responsible. But, simultaneously with the obvious movements in the world of affairs—the discrediting of the ideal of a paternal, authoritarian Government, the breakdown of central control over local administration, the dislocation caused by the Civil War, the expansion of trade and the shifting of industry from its accustomed seats—it is perhaps not fanciful to detect in the ethics of Puritanism one force contributing to the change in social policy which is noticeable after the middle of the century.

The loftiest teaching cannot escape from its own shadow. To urge that the Christian life must be lived in a zealous discharge of private duties—how necessary I Yet how readily perverted to the suggestion that there are no vital social obligations beyond and above them ! To insist that the individual is responsible, that no man can save his brother, that the essence of religion is the contact of the soul with its Maker, how

true and indispensable 1 But how easy to
slip from
that truth into the suggestion that society
is without
responsibility, that no man can help his
brother, that
the social order and its consequences are
not even the
scaffolding by which men may climb to
greater heights,
but something external, alien and irrelevant
—some-
thing, at best, indifferent to the life of the
spirit, and, at
worst, the sphere of the letter which killeth
and of the
reliance on works which ensnares the soul
into the
slumber of death I In emphasizing that
God's Kingdom
is not of this world, Puritanism did not
always escape
the suggestion that this world is no part
of God's